

F

68

G 792

Discourse . . . Plymouth
on the Two hundred and eighth
Anniversary of the Landing of
the Pilgrims, by Samuel Green.



Class F68

Book G792

REV. MR. GREEN'S

PLYMOUTH SERMON.

1828.

18

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

1950

33

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT PLYMOUTH, DEC. 20², 1828,

ON THE

684

389

TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

LANDING OF THE PILGRIM FATHERS.

BY SAMUEL GREEN,
Pastor of Union Church, Essex Street, Boston.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BOSTON :
PUBLISHED BY PEIRCE & WILLIAMS.

1829.



F68

.G772

15-8352

DISCOURSE.

PSALM xliv, 1, 3.

“ We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what works thou didst in their days, in the times of old. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favor unto them.”

GOD’S ancient Israel found matter for holy song in the wonders shown to the patriarchs, in the escape of their nation from Egypt, and in their miraculous preservation, till safely planted in the promised land. “ I will open my mouth in a parable,” says one of their sweetest bards, “ I will utter dark sayings of old; which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. Marvellous things did he in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. He led them on safely, so that they feared not.”*

The two great nations are not to be found on the page of history, between whom so many points of near resemblance can be traced in relation to their origin, and the remarkable interpositions of Providence in their preservation and progress, as between Israel of old and New England. Nor is the name of the people known, save that of Israel, who are laid under obligations like

* Psal. lxxviii.

ours to dwell with holy gratitude on the memory of their fore-fathers. Here we make no demand on the legends of fiction. The simple record repeated, and imagination can add nothing to the scene of moral sublimity: the patriarchs of New England stand before us, powerful in the strength of heaven, and inflexible in their purposes, as though conscious of being appointed to shape the destiny of unborn millions. To speak worthily of such men, and of their founding a nation like this, is a service too high for me. Standing on this consecrated ground, whether I cast my eye backward or forward, I am awed and overwhelmed. O for the mind conversant with mighty themes, and the eloquent tongue possessed by a Norton, a Hooker, or a Chauncey.

The character of our ancestors, with some notice of the departure from their faith and piety visible among their descendants, will occupy the present hour.

Three centuries of the Christian era had scarcely passed away, before the church of Christ, which had been planted wholly a right vine, began to lose its spirituality, to substitute the form of godliness for the power, and to be captivated more by worldly pomp, than by the glories of a holy heaven. The god of this world multiplied his unmeaning ceremonies, and threw them in as a veil betwixt unthinking mortals and the fountain of light. He shut up the Bible.* Every engine of power, rank, titles,

* Tyndall, styled by Fox "England's Apostle," was cruelly strangled and burnt in 1536, by the English Catholics, for no other crime than his having translated and published the Bible in the English language. His was the first printed copy of the Holy Scriptures entire in the English tongue. Most of his first edition of the New Testament was bought up at great expense and burnt by the Bishop of London at Paul's Cross.—*Middleton's Life of Tyndall*.

Some were cited into the Bishop's courts for teaching their children the Lord's prayer in *English*.—*History of the Puritans*, Vol. 1, p. 64.

In the reign of Henry V, a law was enacted, "*That whatsoever they were that should read the Scriptures in the mother tongue, they should forfeit land, cattle,*

wealth, talents, and usage, over all Christendom, was devoted to his interests. The cry of oppressed and murdered souls went up to heaven. But whilst the dark night grew darker, God was preparing the materials of an army "who should make war upon the beast and overcome him." Wickliffe,* Huss, Luther, Zuinglius, and Calvin lead the van in this glorious strife, and with others, roused and astonished the world. God had raised up and endowed these men with grace and parts for the express purpose of throwing off the shackles of papal ignorance and superstition, and leading the church from her house of a thousand years bondage.

But the Reformation was not the business of a day. The power of Rome over our mother country was broken by Henry VIII in the year 1530; but for the period of one hundred and sixty years following, it was as necessary that men of great intellectual and moral energy should stand prepared to repel the violent onsets of the returning foe, and defend the trembling church, as that a Luther should have been raised up to begin this tremendous conflict. Had it not been for such champions of the truth as Knox, Hooper,† Rogers, Latimer, Cranmer, Ridley, and hundreds of others, most of whom sealed their testimony with their blood, and died triumphantly at the stake, the dark cloud of papal idolatry and oppression would have returned, and settled down upon our mother country even to this day, as it now rests upon many portions of Europe. The heavens and the earth were shaken in the conflict, and it seemed like the

life, and goods from their heirs forever, and so be condemned for heretics to God, enemies to the crown, and most arrant traitors to the land."—*Emlyn's Complete Coll. of State Trials*, p. 18, as quoted by *Neal, Hist. Pur.*, Vol. 1, p. 55.

* Wickliffe was born in Yorkshire, England, 1324, and has been called "the Morning Star of the Reformation."

† Considered the first Puritan.—*Bogue and Bennett's Hist. Diss.*, Vol. 1, p. 53.

battle of the great day of God Almighty—he bowed the heavens and came down ; his lightnings enlightened the world. Boldness, patience, and strength were granted to his servants, equal to the day.* When Latimer and Ridley were surrounded with the faggots, the former said to the latter, with all the truth of prophecy, “ We shall this day, brother, light such a candle in England, as shall never be put out.”

The circumstances of the early reformers were eminently adapted to form Christians of a vigorous and daring spirit. After a long and most degrading vassalage the human mind began on a sudden to taste the sweets of liberty and feel its inspiration : God’s holy oracles were unlocked, and studied as by men famishing for the bread of life,† the light of truth burst out in its glory, accompanied by the Holy Ghost, and in this struggle with the powers of darkness every feeling of the soul was roused, and every talent put into urgent requisition.

* The following statement will give the reader some idea of the murders committed by the influence and agents of Rome, in her sanguinary efforts to check the progress of truth and light, and extend her iron sceptre over the human mind. “ Pope Julius, in seven years, was the occasion of the slaughter of 200,000 Christians. The massacre in France cut off 100,000 in three months. In the persecutions of the Albigenses and Waldensers, 1,000,000 lost their lives. From the beginning of the Jesuits till 1580, that is, in forty years, 900,000 perished. The Duke of Alva, by the hangman, put 36,000 to death. The Inquisition in thirty-six years, destroyed 150,000. In the Irish rebellion 300,000 were destroyed. Besides all these, vast numbers have been destroyed in the subsequent persecutions, in France and Piedmont, in the Palatinate and Hungary. What a cry of blood is here against the church of Rome ! What a body of evidence to show that the spirit of popery is extremely cruel and blood-thirsty !”—*Life of Claude, prefixed to his Defence of the Reformation*. Vol. 1, p. 61. Lon. ed. 1815.

† The attachment of these early reformers to the Holy Scriptures, was remarkable. Thomas Forest, commonly called Vicar of Dollar, who died a martyr in Scotland 1533, was in the habit of committing to memory three chapters of the Bible every day, and repeating them to his servant at night.—*McCrie’s Life of Knox*, p. 409.

Theodore Beza, successor to Calvin, could repeat all the Psalms in Hebrew and all St. Paul’s epistles in Greek, from memory. And Ridley could repeat from memory nearly all the epistles in Greek.—*Middleton’s Evang. Biography*.

As this generation of holy champions were called home, most of them to a martyr's crown, there arose in the church, as their immediate successors, a class of men whom they had educated, of a kindred spirit, possessed of equal learning, boldness, and zeal, and endowed with more of the unction of the Holy Spirit. Such men as Ainsworth,* Baxter, Flavel, and John Owen,† standard bearers in the army of the faithful.‡ Of this school of reformers and martyrs, were the fathers of New England. They were the associates and companions in tribulation of these eminent servants of the most high God. This class of men, reproachfully denominated Puritans by the more licentious, when the first reformers fell amidst contempt and blood, boldly entered the Thermopylæ of the church, and in the strength of Omnipotence maintained the cause of truth and vital godliness against the most violent attacks of persecution, till the dethronement of Charles I, and the establishment of the Commonwealth under Cromwell in 1649.§ But,

* Ainsworth had made his arrangements for emigrating to New England, but was prevented by death. Neal denominates him the Rabbi of his age.—*Neal's History of the Puritans*. Vol. 1, p. 516.

† Owen was once resolved on settling in New England, but was stopped by an express order from the court of Charles I. *Ib.* Vol. 5, p. 102.

‡ The violent convulsions, which were created by the contest in the seventeenth century, between truth and error, the friends of Jesus and the abettors of a corrupt and oppressive ecclesiastical policy, rendered England during that century remarkable for men exhibiting originality and power of thought. In addition to the above, I might mention such men as Chillingworth, Lord Bacon, Lord Chief Justice Hale, Milton, Robert Boyle, (of whom it is said he always read the Scriptures upon his knees,) Locke, and Sir Isaac Newton.

§ In a political point of view, this contest, which issued in the death of Charles I, has not been sufficiently understood and estimated. Says an eloquent writer, "that great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles, which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forests, which have aroused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the

like the children of Israel, they greatly multiplied under their cruel oppressions. The armies of Cromwell were composed to no inconsiderable extent, of these Puritans ; and they were armies, the like of which the world has never seen. Throughout whole regiments every camp had the decency and the religious exercises of a pious family : not an oath, or an indecent word was heard : the Sabbath was sacredly observed. The officers would pray with their men, and often keep with them days of fasting and prayer. The two great parties in the kingdom at this time, the high church with the Catholics on the side of the king, and the Puritans on the side of the Commonwealth, "were known," says Richard Baxter, "in that the king's party *swore*, and the Puritans *prayed*." And no sooner had the Puritans the ascendancy, than the whole moral aspect of London and the kingdom was changed. From being most glaringly profaned, the Sabbath became a day of silence and devotion ; every species of vice was diligently watched and suppressed. This new moral aspect may be stigmatised, as has often been done, by infidels and high church men, as a system of cant and hypocrisy : but do men gather grapes of thorns ? There must have been an extraordinary degree of piety in the country, and that too in many of the master spirits of the day, or such effects, on no possible supposition, could have been produced.

From this class of men it is our glory to have descended. Great numbers of the most learned, devout, and

knees of the oppressors with a strange and unwonted fear!"—*Edinburgh Review*, 1825: *Article, Milton*.

It bespeaks not a little for the piety and exalted talents of Oliver Cromwell, that he should have appointed Sir Matthew Hale to be Lord Chief Justice of England, John Owen to be Chancellor of the University of Oxford, John Milton to be his Latin Secretary, and Baxter and Howe to be his chaplains.

enterprising of this class, during the reigns of James I* and Charles I, and after the death of Cromwell,† under the renewed oppressions of Charles II‡ and James II, fled from vice and persecution to these shores, and had a forming hand in our civil and religious institutions, and in our habits and characters. To their holy and elevated motives, the great John Owen bears this testimony: “You know how many in this nation, in the days not long since passed, yea, how many thousands left their native soil, and went into a waste and howling wilderness, in the uttermost parts of the world, to keep their souls undefiled and chaste unto their dear Lord Jesus.”§

Before leaving their native country they made the following eloquent appeal to James I and his bishops. “Let them sift well our courses, and let them name wherein we have done aught that may justly be said to ill become the ministers of Christ. Have we drawn any sword? Have we used any threats? Hath the state been put into any fear or hazard through us? Manifest

* During the first year of the reign of James I, 300 ministers were deprived of their livings, imprisoned, or forced to leave the country. And under his successor, Charles I, during twelve years of Archbishop Laud’s administration, 4,000 emigrants became planters in America, and 77 divines ordained in the Church of England became pastors of emigrant churches in America, before the year 1640.—*Bogue and Bennett’s Hist. Diss.* Vol. 1, p. 83.

† In the spring of the year 1638, eight sail of ships were lying at one time in the river Thames, bound for New England, filled with Puritan families, among whom were Oliver Cromwell, and John Hampden, Esq., who, seeing no end of the oppressions of their native country, determined to spend the remainder of their days in America; but they were all detained by an order from Charles.—*Hist. of the Puritans.* Vol. 2, p. 342.

‡ “The great Mr. Locke styles the 2,000 ministers ejected on the accession of Charles II, learned, pious, orthodox divines; and we have no hesitation in saying, that of them the world was not worthy, nor have their equals been seen in any age or nation.”—*History of Dissenters.* Vol. 1, p. 98.

§ Sixty thousand persons are said to have suffered for dissent, and seven thousand perished in prison during the reigns of Charles II and James II, a period only of twenty-nine years.—*ib.* p. 105.

§ *Magnalia*, Vol. 1, p. 227.

disgraces have been cast upon us, and we have endured them ; the liberty of our ministry hath been taken from us, and, (though with bleeding hearts,) we have sustained it.—We have been cast out of our houses, and deprived of our ordinary maintenance, and yet have we blown no trumpet of sedition. These things have gone very near us, yet did we never entertain the thought of violence.”* Such a scrutiny could these great and holy men challenge even from their eagle-eyed adversaries.

The controversy which drove our forefathers from their native land did not relate in form, though it did virtually, to the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. These were indeed substantially embraced in the articles of that church by which they were most bitterly persecuted, but they were there only as a dead letter. Of little consequence did an orthodox creed appear, if that creed must be incumbered by a multiplicity of human forms and popish superstitions. They deemed an Orthodox confession, embarrassed by so many carnal ordinances, but a stratagem of Satan, to lull the conscience whilst it chilled and destroyed the soul. They wished not only to have the Sun of Righteousness in their system, but to have the clouds and mists so removed that his healing and quickening beams might shine forth. Hooper, Grindall, Cartwright, Usher, and many others, at a very early period of the reformation, foresaw what would be the result, if so many vestiges of popery were suffered to remain in the English church.† The more

* History of the Puritans. Vol. 2, p. 92.

† “ January 31, 1563, the convocation of the English clergy met, and finished the xxxix Articles. Of the lower house, forty-three present were for throwing out the ceremonies, but thirty-five were for keeping them ; and these with the help of proxies, carried their measures by one vote. The Bishops immediately began to urge the clergy to subscribe to the liturgy and ceremonies, as well as to the articles. Coverdale, Fox, Humphrey, and others, refused to subscribe ; and this was the epoch of NONCONFORMITY.”—*Holmes' Am. An.* Vol. 1. p. 433.

spiritual part of the ministers and laymen began at first to contend against the priests' habits which had been adopted from the church of Rome. This may seem to us but an indifferent circumstance; but its association with the corruptions of popery gave it no inconsiderable influence at that day. But it was not a struggle on the part of the more spiritual members to disencumber the church of a few unscriptural and injurious ceremonies merely; they were required to receive to their communion those who gave no evidence of being born of the Spirit. Nor were they permitted to exercise the discipline of the Gospel upon disorderly members. And the shameful profanation of the holy Sabbath they were compelled, by the canons of the church, to encourage from their pulpits. These corruptions allowed, the Puritans saw, would make the truth of God, however clearly expressed in articles, of none effect.* Strong in faith and ardent in love to Jesus, they could not temporize; and whilst the worldly and the ambitious scrambled for the offices

* These remnants of a popish and worldly policy in the church were most lamentable in their results upon the Gospel ministry. Most of the able and devoted servants of God, men possessed of a conscience, were driven from the service of the church, and the people perished by thousands through a famine of hearing the word. For a considerable period, during the latter part of the sixteenth century, there was not one clergyman in the populous town of Northampton, though the people plead for the bread of life. In the county of Cornwall there were one hundred and forty clergymen, not one of whom was capable of preaching a sermon, and most of them were pluralists and non-residents. The citizens of London, in a petition to Parliament, use the following language: 'There are in this city a great number of churches, but the one half of them at least are utterly unfurnished of preaching ministers;—in the other half, partly by means of non-residents, which are very many, and partly from want of proper qualifications, there is scarcely the tenth man that makes conscience to wait upon his charge.' The people of Cornwall, in their petition, say, 'They have one hundred and sixty churches, the greatest part of which are supplied by men who are guilty of the grossest sins.' 'Most of the incumbents who retained their places under such a corrupt ecclesiastical government, were disguised papists, fitter to sport with the timbrel and pipe, than to take into their hands the book of the Lord.'—*History of the Puritans*. Vol. 1. pp. 363—370.

and emoluments of a national church, and deprecated a reform, or any nearer approach to the unobstructed blaze of truth, the Puritans brought every worldly advantage and laid it as a sacrifice on the altar of conscience, and, in face of reproach, of rage, and of death, resolved they would have a ministry and a church built on the simple principles of God's holy word.

They were the firm advocates of civil liberty, a characteristic of men eminent for piety; but civil liberty was not the all absorbing consideration. Religion, the pure religion of Jesus Christ, with them was the first and last object of pursuit. They could die in slavery, or perish in poverty; they could wear out their lives in banishment, or expire amidst savage tortures; but having known by blessed experience the power of holy truth, they could not relinquish, either for themselves or their children, its uninterrupted enjoyment.

After repeated seasons of fasting and prayer for the direction of him, whose they were and whom they served, a company of these Puritans, among whom were the first of the New England pilgrims, in 1610, bade adieu to their native land and settled in Leyden.* Here, though no king or bishop interfered with their religious privileges, the examples of surrounding impiety threatened to blast their hopes of an enlightened and godly posterity. High and glorious was the enterprise for which providence was in a mysterious way preparing them. Holland was not fitted to be the scene of its mighty developement. Their eye in the darkest seasons was immovably fixed on Him, who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. In faith and prayer were the foundations of New England laid. The plan from

* Morton's New England Memorial, p. 18, 5th edition.

its first suggestion was spread out before that God who hath promised to direct the steps of those who in all their ways acknowledge him. And his promise hath he most remarkably fulfilled. Arrangements for their departure were completed, and the parents with their children, accompanied by their venerable pastor, Robinson, were collected on the shore, with a wide ocean and an unknown wilderness before them. Lovely, venerable band! destined, most of you, soon to offer up your lives to purchase privileges for your posterity! They fell upon their knees, and in fervent prayer commended themselves to him, who of old led Joseph like a flock.* Borne in the Almighty arms across the Atlantic, their first concern, on setting their feet upon yonder rock, was to glorify the God of heaven, and to make all their arrangements, domestic, civil, and religious, so as to please and honor him. They were resolved that there should be one nation in the world, planted in the fear and for the glory of the world's great Maker and Redeemer.

This resolution was evinced in their concern for the pious education of their children. In order that this nation might be full of the glory of God, they wisely determined to fill it with the knowledge of God. They did not aim at giving their children the polish of a pleasure loving world. Far more enlarged and elevated were their views. They wished so to educate them, that they might be fitted for usefulness in the church on

* On the first of July, 1620, they bid farewell to Leyden, and were accompanied by their Christian friends to Delft-Haven where the ship lay ready to receive them. Their friends continued with them through the night, which was spent in conversation and prayer.—*New England Memorial*, pp. 22, 23, and *Neal's History of New England*. Vol. 1, p. 79.

No sooner had they landed at Plymouth, than a terrible mortality raged among them, occasioned by the fatigues of the voyage and the want of necessaries, which, in the course of two or three months, carried off more than half their number.—*Neal's History of New England*. Vol. 1, p. 87.

earth, and for a companionship with angels in heaven. Probably there never was so thorough a system of family instruction as that adopted among the Puritans in England and Scotland,* commencing soon after the reformation, and attaining its highest perfection at the time our fathers left their native shore to plant this colony. Parents in those times of persecution realised the preciousness of the Bible, and felt that a thorough knowledge of its truths was their children's best safeguard against the most dangerous errors and vices; and as thousands of the most learned and godly ministers were shut out of their pulpits, and prohibited all public instruction, they and their people labored more abundantly to promote family instruction. Each family was a nursery for the church and for heaven.

Within sixteen years after our fathers landed on this shore, they founded a College, which they solemnly dedicated "to Christ and the Church." "It was established at Cambridge because the godly Mr. Thomas Shepard was minister there, whose energy of preaching, and vigilance in detecting, and zeal in opposing the errors of the day were so distinguished.† And were they

* The following testimony is a striking comment on the effects of this system as exhibited in Scotland. Rev. Samuel Benion, successor to the celebrated James Owen in the Academy at Shrewsbury, having visited Scotland in 1703, says, "All the while he was in Glasgow, (about a year at the University,) though he lay in a public inn, he never saw any drunk, nor heard one swear. And in all the inns on the road in Scotland, where he lay, though some of them were mean, they had family worship daily performed morning and evening."—*History of Dissenters*. Vol. 2. p. 28.

† Allen's Biog. Dictionary. Art. Shepard.

Mr. Prince, in his Christian History, says "that one Mr. Pattin, an ancient man of Cambridge, eminent for piety, plain-heartedness, and simplicity, used frequently to remind people of Mr. Shepard's and Mr. Mitchell's powerful and awakening ministry, saying it was common to see some one or other crying or manifesting signs of great distress or concern of soul, either in time of sermon or at the end of the meeting: that they rarely preached a sermon without some visible effects on some one or other. And when the people returned from meet-

unconcerned about the piety and religious sentiments of the officers of this College? Just the reverse. Our fathers planned not for the narrow scope of time, but for eternity. Charles Chauncey, the second President, was eminent in England for his learning and godliness, and in that country preached the Gospel with great success in the conversion of souls. While President of the College he usually spent three hours of the day in communion with God, besides frequent days of fasting and prayer. And used to say to the students, "atonement by the blood of Christ lost, and the Gospel is lost;" and likewise to "solemnly caution them against those doctrines which *exalt man, and debase Christ.*"* Says Increase Mather, who was appointed to the presidency in 1685, "The chief object, for which our fathers in the strength of the Lord did erect a College in New England, was that scholars might there be educated for the service of Christ and his churches, in the work of the ministry, and that they might be seasoned in their tender years with such principles as brought their blessed progenitors into this wilderness." "There is no one thing of greater concernment to these churches, in present and after times, than the prosperity of that College. The churches are not like to continue pure golden candlesticks, if the College, which should supply them prove apostate. If the fountain be corrupted, how should the streams be pure, which should make glad the city of God. How should plants of renown spring up there, if the College itself become a degenerate plant? You who are tutors there,

ing, it was a question, which those who had been detained at home were wont to ask them, 'whether any body appeared to be wrought upon to-day, or whether there were any visible effects of the word?'—or expressions of the like import."—Vol. 1, p. 217.

Mr. Shepard was preceded by the renowned Mr. Hooker, who afterward removed to Hartford.

* *Magnalia*. Vol. 1, p. 426.

have a great advantage put into your hands to prevent it, and I pray God to give you wisdom to know it.”* Such was the holy solicitude felt by our illustrious forefathers for the pious education of their youth, and their high and sacred object in establishing and endowing their College.

Whence sprang our system of free schools? Wholly from the enlightened piety of our pilgrim fathers. At a very early period they enacted a law obliging all heads of families to teach their children and apprentices so much learning as should enable them to read well the English language.† And soon upon this obliged every town of a hundred families to establish a grammar school. This, for that age especially, was a noble act, and proved that our fathers had as much outstripped their contemporaries, as the stately oak towers above the shrubs that darken the earth beneath it. Such a system firmly established among a people, and their oppressors may drop their rod in despair. By this single act our fathers threw around this infant colony a defence more invincible than could have been created by the whole army and navy of Great Britain.

With a sanctity inviolate, did they invest the holy Sabbath. A religious observation of this holy day, says Neal, was the distinguishing mark of a Puritan.‡ Sooner

* “You know,” says this same holy man, addressing the students, “I have often exhorted you above all things to *study Christ*, and to be mindful of *the one thing necessary*.”—*Magnalia*. Vol. 2, p. 63.

† “All parents shall teach their children to read, and all masters shall catechise their families once a week. The Selectmen may examine children and apprentices, and admonish parents and masters, if they find them ignorant, and with the consent of two magistrates, or the next county court, put them into better hands.”—*An abridgement of the Laws and Ordinances of N. E. to 1700*, Neal’s *Hist. of N. E.* Vol. 2, p. 673.

‡ Neal’s *Hist. of the Puritans*. Vol. 1, p. 453.

“It was a distinguishing mark of a Puritan in these times, to see him going to church twice a day, with his Bible under his arm: and while others were at

would those holy men go to the prison or to the stake, than countenance a profanation of its sacred hours. And not a few of the ministers were actually driven from their pulpits, and some imprison'd for no other crime, than because they would not read king Charles' book of Sunday sports from the pulpit, and suffer their parishioners, without rebuke, to profane sacred hours with carnal mirth.* We can readily imagine with what reverence for the Lord's day, such men commenced the settlement of New England: and how inviolably it was observed, how silent the streets, and how universal the attendance on God's public ordinances, during the whole period that these men lived and shed their holy influence over this land, is matter of record.

They inculcated the spirit of missionary enterprise, and set an illustrious example of that apostolic service. That they might diffuse the light of the Gospel among the natives in North America, was one of the motives which induced them to emigrate. "O," said the venerable Robinson, on hearing that some Indians had been cut off for having engaged in a murderous conspiracy, "O that you had converted some before you had killed any!" And the labors of Eliot,† Mayhew, Bourne, Cotton, Treat, Sergeant, Edwards, and Brainerd to this end, must be recorded among the first attempts of the church, deserving the name, to convert the heathen na-

plays and interludes, at revels, or walking in the fields, or at the diversions of bowling, fencing, &c. on the evening of the Sabbath, *these* with their families, were employed in reading the Scriptures, singing psalms, catechising their children, repeating sermons, and prayer."—*Neal's His. of the Puritans*, p. 560.

* Neal's History of the Puritans. Vol. 2, pp. 267, 269.

† Eliot was pastor of the church in Roxbury, and labored among the Indians in that vicinity. The Mayhews labored on Martha's Vineyard; Bourne at Marshpee. Cotton was pastor of the church in Plymouth, had under his care about 500 Indians, and Mr. Treat about the same number, in the neighborhood of Plymouth. Sergeant and Edwards labored among the Stockbridge tribe, and Brainerd at the Forks of the Delaware.

tions to Christianity, for the space of a thousand years. New England in this godlike labor was before Old England. Nor were their efforts small or unsuccessful. Eliot, who came over in 1631, translated the whole Bible into the Indian tongue, also several Catechisms, Baxter's Call, and some other devotional books. At one time there were, in this state alone, not fewer than twenty four organized Christian societies, and these instructed by twenty four Indian preachers, who were in some good measure qualified for their work. In some villages a large proportion of the families were families of prayer.* Our fathers stand forth to the world not only as an example of the strictest integrity in all their dealings with them,† but of true Christian benevolence in

* This was the state of the Indians A. D. 1687. *Holmes' Am. Annals.*

For the purpose of building houses of worship, supporting ministers and schoolmasters among the American Indians, Cromwell during his government, ordered a general collection through the churches of England.—*Calamy's Life of Baxter*, p. 406.

In 1718 a general collection was made in the churches of Boston for evangelizing the Indians. In the Old Church was collected £160, in the North £90, in the South Church £116, and in the New Church £117.—*Neal's Hist. of N. E.* Vol. 1, p. 265.

Rev. Experience Mayhew published a small volume entitled "Indian Converts," in which he gave a particular account of thirty Indian ministers, who appeared to adorn their profession.—*Winslow's Sketch*, pp. 60, 65.

† That our fathers often spoke of those tribes which were at war with them, in language which sounds harsh to our ears, is admitted, but then the peril they were in, and the immense sufferings they endured from the natives, should be taken into the account, in making up our judgement on the subject. Some have represented our fathers as wronging them out of their lands, and waging against them unprovoked and extirminating wars; but nothing could be further from the uniform testimony of the most authentic histories in relation to their intercourse with them, than such representations. That they purchased of the natives large tracts of land for a trifling sum is true; but as the circumstances of the country then were, their lands were worth but a trifling sum. Says Cotton Mather, "the English did not claim one foot of ground in the country, till they had fairly purchased it of the natives; nay, so cautious were they of doing them injustice, that they made a law that some lands, which lay convenient for the Indians, should never be purchased out of their hands. They also enacted, that if any Indians should be civilized, and desire to live among the English, they should have a portion of land allotted to them; and if a sufficient

caring for their spiritual welfare. In both respects they stand unrivalled on the page of history. What was the conduct of the French, and most of the other adventurers to this continent? How did the conduct of the Spaniards in South America, and how do the more recent measures, pursued by Georgia and Alabama in relation to them compare with the Christian kindness of our puritan ancestors?

Most sacredly did they guard the purity of the church, that purity which has ever been essential to her prosperity. With holy vigilance they guarded her doors against all, who gave not good evidence of being born of the Holy Spirit; and none would they permit to remain within her sacred pale, whose lives were a scandal to religion. Instead of our fathers making little or no distinction between the church and the world, as some have of late most strangely attempted to persuade us, their conscientious strictness in church admissions and discipline, was one of the crimes alleged against them in England, for which many of them were deprived of their pulpits and imprisoned. It was a maxim with them, fundamental and universally adopted, says one of their distinguished lights, "that churches are bound in duty, to inquire, not only into the knowledge and Orthodoxy, but into the *spiritual state* of those whom they receive into full communion. And to omit inquiries as to the spiritual experience of those who come to the table of the Lord has a tendency to fill the sanctuary with those, who never had any experimental knowledge of the things of God."* Why did they secede from the half reformed churches of the mother country? Was not one of their principal and

number should agree to live together, they should be incorporated, and have a grant of lands out of those which the English had already bought of them."—*Hist. Diss.* Vol. 2, p. 431.

* *Magnalia.* Vol. 2, pp. 56, 58.

most notorious complaints this, that evidence of regeneration was not made a condition of membership, that the salutary discipline enjoined in the Gospel was discarded, and that thus the church was reduced to a moral level with the world? Yet there are those who are making strenuous efforts to break down the distinction between the church and the world; and in so doing, they even have the presumption to appeal to the usage of our forefathers: and when driven from this ground by a thousand infallible witnesses, they gravely tell us they are *improving* upon the usage of our fathers. An improvement upon their usage to abandon a principle, which they rescued from the desolations of a thousand years at the price of blood! Is it not rather a relapse into the laxity and worldliness of popery? Sons of the Pilgrims, forget not, down to the latest generation, that, in the view of your pious ancestors, the glory and strength of Zion consists in her purity. Reduce her to the level of the world, and you not only obscure her light, and paralyze her energies, but destroy her very existence.

Relying as they did on the influences of the Holy Spirit accompanying the truth, to prepare lively stones for God's spiritual Zion, they knew how to prize, and often enjoyed, revivals of religion, those glorious refreshings from the presence of the Lord which so remarkably crowned apostolic labors. During the first thirty years the Gospel had free course, run, and was remarkably glorified. Says a distinguished civilian of that day, "The Lord Jesus Christ was so plainly held out in the preaching of the Gospel to poor lost sinners, and the absolute necessity of the *new birth*, and God's Holy Spirit in those days was pleased to accompany the word with such efficacy upon the hearts of many; that our hearts were taken off from old England and set on

heaven. Many were converted and joined unto the several churches where they lived, confessing their faith publicly, and showing before all the assembly their experiences of the workings of God's Spirit in their hearts to bring them to Christ. Oh the many tears which have been shed in Dorchester meeting house at such times! In those days God, even our God, did bless New England."* Says another, alluding to the same seasons of refreshing, "Let us call to mind the first glory in the first planting of New England. Oh that converting glory which did then appear: multitudes were converted to thee, O Zion. Let me say multitudes, multitudes were converted to thee, O Hartford, to thee, O New Haven, and to thee, O Windsor; and the same may be said of many churches of Christ in New England."† Between 1630 and 1640 the spiritual refreshings were numerous and extensive throughout New England.‡

In the year 1680, immediately after an express and solemn renewal of covenant by the churches with God and one another, God poured out his Spirit and greatly revived his work in many parts of New England.§ One

* Prince's Christian History. Vol. i. p. 72.

† A Sermon preached before the General Court of the Colony at Hartford, May 14, 1674, by Rev. James Fitch. *Prince's Christian History*. Vol. i. p. 76.

‡ "There were a great number of children and servants of every age, who came over both in the year 1630, and in the ten following years, that came hither only under the common impression of a pious ministry or education, or the religious influence of their friends: and who were therefore fit materials for the numerous conversions which quickly followed, under the lively, searching, and awakening preaching of the primitive ministers." Rev. Mr. Prince's Election Sermon, delivered at Cambridge, May 27, 1730. *Prince's Christian History*. Vol. i. p. 63.

These refreshings from the presence of the Lord were not confined to New England: from 1625, to 1630, between forty and fifty parishes in Scotland were visited with powerful revivals of religion. *Ibid*, pp. 8, 14.

§ The town of Plymouth was blessed with revivals in 1670, and 1680, under the ministry of the pious John Norton.

of the eminent ministers of that day says, very remarkable was the blessing of God on those churches who cordially entered into these measures for reformation, "not only by a great advancement of holiness in the people; but also by a great addition of converts to their holy fellowship. And many thousand spectators will testify that they never saw the special presence of the great God and Saviour more notably discovered than in the solemnities of these opportunities."* In the year 1705, God remembered his covenant and caused the song of redeeming mercy to be heard in many towns; so that one of the devoted ministers of that day says, "I think sometimes that the time of the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh, may be at the door."†

The year 1740, will be ever memorable in the annals of the New England church. The Holy Spirit came down in his great power upon the town of Boston, and withheld not his heavenly influences, till near fifty towns in New England were made to rejoice in the wonders of redeeming mercy. And that we might know how the holy men of that day viewed this glorious revival, ninety of the ministers assembled in Boston in 1743, to express their views of this work, and more than one hundred and thirty bore their solemn testimony to it as a marvellous work of God's Holy Spirit. And in conclusion say, "Now we desire to bow the knee in thanksgiving to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that our eyes have seen and our ears heard such things.‡"

* Prince's Christian History. Vol. 1. p. 107.

† Rev. Mr. Danforth of Taunton. *Prince's Christian History*. Vol. 1. p. 111.
The Rev. Mr. Stoddard of Northampton used to say the Lord blessed him with five harvests. The first was in the year 1679, and the others in the years 1683, 1696, 1712, and 1718. *Ibid*, p. 112.

‡ Prince's Christian History. Vol. 1. p. 162.

In the early days of New England, revivals of religion were not a subject of reproach, at least by any who made the smallest pretensions to seriousness. To promote them, those illustrious men, from whom we deem it our glory to have descended, fasted, and prayed, and labored; and when they enjoyed them, raised their hands to heaven in holy gratitude.* Other countries have indeed known something of those spiritual harvests, but this land of the Pilgrims has been pre-eminently distinguished, and made to share richly in the blessings of the primitive ages of the church, inasmuch as our fathers bore a nearer resemblance in faith and zeal to the apostles and the early Christians, than any community of men collected on the face of the globe.

But what were the doctrinal views of these men, whose piety shone so illustriously in their devotional exercises and in their works?—a question of no small interest. For surely sentiments which on so extensive a scale, and in times of abounding iniquity and error, could produce a character truly apostolic, maintain in the family a system of religious instruction and govern-

* Frequent meetings for prayer and mutual edification in spiritual things are not of recent origin, either among ministers or laymen. 'In the beginning of the country,' says Cotton Mather, 'the ministers had their frequent meetings; nor had they ordinarily any difficulty in their churches, which were not in these meetings offered unto consideration, for their mutual direction and assistance. The *private Christians* also had their private meetings, wherein they would seek the face, and sing the praise of God; and, confer on some practical subject for their mutual edification.' Alluding to the piety and gifts of the lay brethren at this early period, the Rev. Mr. Firman has given this account. 'Plain mechanics have I known, well indoctrinated and humble Christians, excellent in practical piety: they kept their station, did not aspire to be preachers, but for gifts of prayer, few clergymen must come near them. I have known some of them when they did keep their fasts, (as they did often,) they divided the work of prayer; the first begun with confession; the second went on with *petition for themselves*; the third with petition for church and country; and the fourth with *thanksgiving*. And the excellence of their matter filled those who joined them with wonder.' *Magnalia*. Vol. i. p. 220.

ment unparalleled, preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath, promote genuine revivals of religion, cause Zion to rise and shine in her primitive glory, and by the excellency of their institutions perpetuate these blessings with freshness and vigor down to the sixth generation,—the doctrinal views of such men must embrace the great essentials of the Gospel.* The question can be answered at once and with certainty, for those noble ingenuous spirits did not conceal any of their sentiments, nor deal in words of double meaning. They were not afraid of creeds and confessions. They had their views of Scripture doctrines, as all must have who are not sceptics, and having them, they were neither afraid nor ashamed to declare them, and leave them on record. Their views are drawn up and distinctly expressed in the Assembly's Catechism. The assembly of divines in the royal chapel at Westminster, called by the Parliament of the

* With regard to their morals, the following testimony may be interesting. Said the Rev. Mr. Firman in a sermon before the house of Lords and Commons and the Assembly of Divines, after a residence in this country, 'I have lived in a country seven years, and all that time I never heard one profane oath, and all that time I never did see a man drunk in that land.'—*Prince's Christian History*. Vol i. p. 104.

There never was, perhaps, before seen such a body of pious people together on the face of the earth. For those who came over first, came hither for the sake of religion, and for that pure religion which was entirely hated by the loose and profane of the world. Their civil and ecclesiastical leaders were exemplary patterns of piety. They encouraged only the virtuous to come with and follow them: they were so strict on the vicious both in the church and state, that the incorrigible could not endure to live in the country, and went back again. Profane swearers and drunkards are not known in the land. And it quickly grew so famous for religion abroad, that scarce any other but those who liked it, came over for many years.—Sermon of Rev. Mr. Prince, delivered at Cambridge, to the General Assembly of the Province of Massachusetts, May 27, 1730, being the Anniversary for the election of His Majesty's Council for the Province, and published by their order.—*Prince's Christian History*. Vol. i. p. 63.

An honorable testimony was borne to the elevated standard of morals which our fathers maintained while in Holland. Said the magistrates of Leyden, 'these English have lived among us now these twelve years, and yet we never had *one* suit or action come against them.'—*Morton's Memorial*.

first Charles, were mainly of the school of the Puritans; and this Catechism was adopted by our forefathers at an early period, and became universally their family catechism.* They called indeed no man master, but in their leading views they were thorough Calvinists; not because this system of truths was most ably illustrated and defended by that great and good man, John Calvin;† but because they found it in the Bible, and felt and saw its wonderful effects on the hearts and lives of men.‡ Their views were essentially the same as those entertained by all the Orthodox churches of our country at the present day: The Supreme Divinity of our Lord

* A General Synod of the New England churches, convened at Cambridge in the year 1648, passed unanimously the following vote: "The Synod having perused and considered with much gladness of heart the Confession of Faith published by the reverend Assembly in England, do judge it to be very holy, Orthodox, and judicious in matters of faith; and do freely consent to the substance thereof, and recommend it to the churches."—*History of Dissenters*. Vol. 2. p. 436.

† John Knox, the great Scottish reformer, writing from Geneva where he lived for some years in the most intimate converse with Calvin, gives the following testimony: "I neither fear, nor am ashamed to say, here is the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the apostles."—*McCrie's Life of Knox* p. 141.

‡ The following testimony on the happy moral effects of these doctrines in Scotland, from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Chalmers, is worthy of serious consideration. "How comes it that Scotland, which of all the countries in Europe, is the most signalised for the rigid Calvinism of her pulpits, should also be the most signalised by the moral glory that sits on the aspect of her general population? How, in the name of mystery, should it happen that such a theology as ours, is conjoined with, perhaps, the yet most unvitiated peasantry among the nations of Christendom? The allegation against our churches is, that in the argumentation of our abstract and speculative controversies, the people are so little schooled to the performance of good works. And how then is it that, in our courts of justice, when compared with the calendars of our sister kingdom, there should be so vastly less to do with their evil works? It is certainly a most important experience that in that country where is the most Calvinism, there should be the least crime—that what may be called the most doctrinal nation of Europe should, at the same time, be the least depraved—and that the land wherein the people are most deeply imbued with the principles of salvation by grace, should be the least distempered, either by their week-day profligacies, or their Sabbath profanations."—*Sermon at the opening of the Scotch National Church in London, May, 1827*.

Jesus Christ, atonement for sin by his most precious blood, the absolute necessity of regeneration for all men wrought by the special agency of the Holy Ghost, and the eternity of future rewards and punishments: these with their kindred doctrines, coming from heaven, were in their souls, as they will be in all who cordially embrace them, a wellspring of life, vital to their dearest hopes, and in support of which they were ready to lay down their lives.

Justice to the memory of the dead, and likewise to the occasion on which we are assembled, demands of me at least a passing notice of the melancholy decline both in doctrinal views, and in practice, which has taken place in this land of the Pilgrims. For the first century the churches of New England maintained in a good degree their primitive character. Harvard College, under the presidency of such learned and godly men as Chauncey, Oaks, and Increase Mather, poured forth her pure streams, making glad the city of God. The Holy Spirit was then honored within her walls, and his heavenly influences descended upon her sons, and they went forth "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," and were bright and shining lights in our churches. This century had scarcely passed before some of the watchmen began to lose their spirituality, and to fall asleep upon their watchtowers. Church discipline was neglected. The standard of admission to the ordinances was lowered down to meet the feelings of the prayerless and the worldly;* and that preaching which presses the con-

* About the close of this century the opinion gained ground among the churches, that the sacrament of the Lord's supper was a converting ordinance and consequently that evidence of regeneration was not necessary to constitute a right to its participation.

The celebrated Dr. Owen very justly remarks, "The letting go this principle, that particular churches ought to consist of *regenerate persons*, brought in the great apostasy of the Christian church."

science, brings the sinner before the tribunal of the heart-searching God, and leads him in his anguish to the blood of atonement, was exchanged for a moral essay, or a dry speculation. Loud and bitter were the lamentations over the violations of the Sabbath, and the neglect of family religion, uttered by the aged Simeons, and a few young Elijahs.* This incubus of a worldly spirit was somewhat broken about the middle of the last century by the holy zeal and truly apostolic labors of Edwards, the Tennants, and George Whitefield. These men, like Moses and Aaron, ran in between the living and the dead, and the plague of moral death was in part staid. The Holy Ghost descended, many ministers were converted,† the dormant graces of others quickened into

* So alarming had this declension become in the days of Cotton Mather, as to lead him to give utterance to this rather remarkable prediction, 'that in forty years more, should this declension continue to make progress as it had done, convulsions would ensue, in which *churches would be gathered out of churches.*' *Spirit of the Pilgrims.* Vol. 2. p. 70.

The following extract is from a sermon preached about 1740, by the Rev. Mr. Prince of the Old South Church, Boston. "Thus this wonderful work of the grace of God, begun in England, and brought over hither, was carried on while the greater part of the first generation lived, for about thirty years: and then the second generation rising up and growing thick upon the stage; a little after 1660, there began to appear a decay: and this increased to 1670, when it grew very visible and threatening, and was generally complained of, and bewailed bitterly by the pious among them: and yet much more to 1680, when but few of the first generation remained."—*Prince's Christian History.* Vol. I. pp. 94, 95, 97, 98, *et passim.*

This mourning of Increase Mather and other eminent men over the growing degeneracy of their times, has been represented as the result of weakness, and illiberal views; but surely a knowledge of our early history, united with the benevolence of the Gospel, is sufficient to create in any bosom a sympathy with their loudest lamentations. And those who are disposed to make light of such pious grief would do well to remember our Saviour's admonition: "Blessed are they that weep now, for they shall be comforted; but wo to them that laugh now, for they shall weep and lament."—*See Ware's History of the Second Church in Boston.* Disc. i. pp. 10, 11.

† The following extracts of a letter from the Rev. Mr. Porter of Bridgewater, father of the present Dr. Porter, of Roxbury, presents but one instance out of many. "I shall always mention with respect and honor the name of Whitefield, whatever others may think or say of him, from the benefit one of the most

life, and many churches greatly refreshed. Not a few however had so far lost the spirit of the Puritans that they reproached and blasphemed.* These holy servants of God, ascended to their reward, and the work of deterioration went on. The small amount of ministerial labors, and the cold and pointless preaching of Arminianism, paralyzed the churches, and prepared the way for a still farther progress in the downward road of error, until about twenty years since, some of the ministers were enabled to introduce and preach, though with great caution, first high Arianism, then Unitarianism down to its lowest grades.†

unworthy of Christ's ministers hopes he received by his holy and fervent ministrations. Be sure I knew nothing rightly of my sin and danger, of my need of a Saviour, or of the way of salvation by him; neither was I established in the doctrines of grace, (though a preacher, and one who endeavored to instruct others in the way,) till I heard that man of God. And if the Lord had permitted me to have took the oversight of a flock, as I had a call to do, the blind would have led the blind, and so it is like we both would have fallen into the ditch. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name, for what he did for me, through the instrumentality of that man."—*Prince's Christian History*. Vol. 1. pp. 397, 398.

* Such progress had the declension made at this time, about 1740, that the pious Whitefield, though he came in the very spirit of the Puritan fathers, was excluded from many pulpits; and those of a similar devotedness and zeal, both ministers and laymen were in several instances persecuted, fined, and banished by the opposers of revivals and a faithful searching ministry.—*See in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, Letters on the Introduction and Progress of Unitarianism in New England*,—a series of most valuable articles on this subject.

† That Unitarianism gained its present footing in New England by *concealment*, we have the testimony of some of its most respectable advocates. Said the Rev. Francis Parkman, in the year 1812, speaking of Dr. Freeman, "Though on other subjects he is as explicit and unreserved, as he is able and intelligent, I never heard him express a Unitarian sentiment; and I believe he carefully avoids it in the pulpit, because it might unnecessarily disturb some of his hearers. There is now one more gentleman in Boston, who, with his intimate friends, may, perhaps, be considered a Unitarian; but he maintains the same cautious reserve. Now, even admitting what I hardly think I have a right to do, that these three gentlemen are Unitarians, to what can all this prudent reserve be ascribed, but to their conviction that the preaching of Unitarian doctrines would be offensive to their hearers, and injurious to their influence?"

This gentleman bears the same testimony relative to the concealment practised by Dr. Kirkland, late president of Harvard College, and thinks that an *honest avowal* of his sentiments would have prevented his election. "Dr. K.

Thus have the most dangerous errors crept in, and while men slept, the enemy hath sowed tares over this goodly heritage of our fathers. O with what feelings would Cotton, Norton, Wilson, Davenport, Charles Chauncey, and others, revisit many of these churches, and hear from the pulpit that Saviour robbed of his divine glories, at whose feet they have for more than a century been casting their crowns with the profoundest reverence! That blood of atonement set at naught, which is in heaven the inspiration of their loftiest songs! Those revivals of religion, which bring men from darkness to light, which comforted and enraptured their hearts amidst their holy toils, now the butt of the profane, and the sneer of those who are their successors in the awful work of watching for souls!*

That New England on the whole is still, in her moral and religious institutions, without a compeer on the face of the globe, we would this day acknowledge with devout gratitude. The lax principles which have been introduced are limited in their extent, and their evil results but partially developed even where they do exist. Their dubious avowal, and the cautionary measures which precede their announcement, show that their abettors are conscious of the frown of a pious ancestry.

was formerly one of the ministers of Boston, and whatever his particular friends may think of his opinions, he never preached these sentiments. Nay, I may venture to say, that had Dr. Kirkland been an *unacknowledged defender of Unitarianism*, he would not have been elected to that office."—*Spirit of the Pilgrims*. 1829. No. 4.

Says the Rev. Dr. Freeman, "I am acquainted with a number of ministers, particularly in the southern part of this state, who avow and publicly preach this [Unitarian] sentiment. There are others more *cautious*, who content themselves with *leading* their hearers, by a course of rational, but *prudent* sermons, *gradually* and insensibly to embrace it."—*Brief Hist. of Unitarianism*. p. 22.

* See, for example, a sneering, blasphemous publication, entitled "Letters of an English Traveller, on Revivals of Religion;" written, as it is said, by a Unitarian clergyman of Massachusetts, and trumpeted in all the Unitarian periodicals of the day, with unmingled applause, over the very graves of the Pilgrims.

They are indeed the principles of moral and religious death, but there is an entailment of pious habits which is not to be annihilated in a moment. A fine physical constitution is not usually to be broken down at once. The eye may beam with intelligence, the countenance glow with health, and the muscle act with vigor, for a little space, after the rest, the industry, and the healthful diet which have formed this noble system have been neglected. The causes of death are at work ; and unless seasonably arrested, the fatal result is as certain as the laws of the universe.

But to what shall we attribute this melancholy decline ? The causes, in my view, are chiefly two. The influx of irreligious persons from abroad, and the prevalence of a worldly self-confident spirit, fostered by great temporal prosperity, especially the latter.* The church of God withstands fire and sword better than prosperity. After the trials of the wilderness, the generation that entered the land of Canaan were a remarkably holy generation ; they served God all the days of Joshua, and the elders who outlived him ; but at the close of the second generation, the spirit of worldliness and self-confidence, fostered by prosperity, prevailed over the spirit of godliness. Under David the worship of God was more regularly established, the people were better in-

* Other causes without doubt have contributed to this apostasy. At the first court of election in Mass. held 1631, it was ordered that none but church members should enjoy the freedom of the body politic. The law was repealed in 1662.—*Holmes' American Annals*. This law had a direct tendency to lower down the standard of church membership. And the half-way covenant, as its legitimate offspring, was introduced in the year 1657. In the year 1700, Mr. Stoddard of Northampton published his views of the Lord's supper as being a converting ordinance, and advocated the right of unregenerated men to its participation. The revolutionary war had doubtless a disastrous influence on our moral and religious character ; and the extensive circulation, about the same period, of deistical publications, served to shake the confidence of many in revelation.—*See Letters on the Introduction and Progress of Unitarianism in New-England. Spirit of the Pilgrims.*

structed in the law, and a general revival of religion prevailed over the nation: this continued for some years into the splendid reign of Solomon, when the ancient Zion arose to her highest pinnacle of glory. Soon, however, this prosperity drew into action that evil heart of unbelief, which departs from the living God. And when idolatry, the easily besetting error of that day, was introduced by Jeroboam, it was found that more than half the nation, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were prepared to fall in with it.

So in respect to the influence of prosperity on the Christian church: after she had spread her arms over the whole Roman empire, and basked for years under the bountiful favors of the great Constantine, it was discovered that her vitals were diseased, that she had at best but the form of godliness while the power had forsaken her, and that she needed only an Arius to throw his system of errors into a plausible form, to enlist half her strength in robbing the Son and the Holy Ghost of all their divine honors.

The churches planted by our fathers during the first century flourished with little molestation. The whole land was theirs, and they had not much to fear from the thunders of the Vatican, or the court of High Commission. Their alliance with the civil authority was too close. A feeling of security induced the sentinels at the door of the church, and at the door of the ministry to sleep. The unconverted minister was flattered by his worldly hearer, and in return smoothed the sermon to the hearer's taste. From how many of the churches of the Pilgrims is the glory departed. Ichabod is inscribed upon their walls. No breath of heaven blows. They are like the mountains of Gilboa on which no dews descend. There may be peace, but it is the peace of the

grave. "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears!" Sons of the Pilgrims, look at these beacons, as they rise around you, and beware of forsaking the God of your fathers. Their graves are before you. This occasion rolls back the light of their doctrines, and the light of their example. "It is reported of the Scythians," says Cotton Mather, "that in battles, when they came to stand upon the graves of their dead fathers, they would there stand immoveable till they died on the spot: and, thought I, why may not such a method now engage the children of the Pilgrims, to stand fast in their faith, and their order, and in the power of godliness? I will show them the graves of their dead fathers; and if any of them do retreat unto the errors of another Gospel, they shall undergo the irresistible rebukes of their progenitors, here brought from the dead for their admonition."

I rejoice that while standing on this consecrated ground, and on an occasion crowded with the most interesting associations, I can cast my eye on more animating visions. This rebuke has been already felt. These desolations shall come to a perpetual end. The spirit of the Pilgrims is reviving. This land has been consecrated by their prayers and sacrifices: it was given them by a covenant keeping God. The conflict may be severe, it may be long; but our fathers' God is with us, and the victory is certain.* The voice of past genera-

* Unitarianism has spread its withering influence over nearly one hundred churches planted by our Puritan ancestors. In most of these places, however, God has preserved a few names who have kept the faith, and suffered no man to take their crown. These, in the true spirit of their Pilgrim fathers, are fast coming out, and forming new churches, and taking a firm and noble stand for the honor of their divine Lord and the doctrines of his cross. Amidst a tempest of reproach and persecution, sustained by the promise and command of their fathers' God, these little bands are rapidly multiplying; and, wherever organized, the truth proves victorious, and they proceed from strength to strength.

tions inspires us with invincible fortitude, and the destiny of unborn millions, with which we are entrusted, utters its thrilling appeal to every sympathy of our bosoms, and every energy of our hands.

Taking a view from this eminence of the character and achievements of the Pilgrims, my mind is forcibly impressed with the reflection—it is the high prerogative of God to bring good out of evil. The persecutions and oppressive measures pursued in the reigns of Mary, and Elizabeth, James, and the Charles's, drove the pious Puritans from their native country, and planted the colony of New England with a choice vine. God prepared a race of men by a series of most remarkable, and, apparently, most adverse providences; schooling them for near two centuries with the severest affliction: and when they were ripe for his great purpose, and he could no longer, consistently with his perfections, preserve and nurture them amidst the corruptions of the old world, he drove them out in a mysterious way, and planted them on these shores, where the exalted principles which he had formed in their bosoms might expand and operate without restraint, and be transmitted down to future generations. This was the chosen spot of all the earth. Had they been planted on the Hudson, as was their plan, they would have been cut off by the hostile Indians. Had they gone to the south, the powerful inducement to hold slaves might have withered that lofty spirit of Christian enterprise, and shaken some of those principles which have produced the mightiest results; and Canada was foreclosed against them by the French Catholics. This was the appointed theatre

The primitive Christians withdrew themselves from the Jewish church, and were greatly blessed of God. St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, in the fourth century, exhorted the Orthodox to withdraw from Arius. *'Be not deceived by a foolish lore of walls,'* he says, *'nor strive any more on such frivolous considerations for the name of peace.'*—*Claude's Defence Reform.* Vol. 2. pp. 5—7.

for the developement of a character, which had so far outstripped the age that it must "dwell alone." And while a flood of corruption returned upon the church in the mother country, under Charles II, and the iron hand of oppression paralyzed all her spiritual energies, this band of extraordinary men were here, under the special care of Zion's King, breathing the exhilarating atmosphere of civil and religious freedom, rising and spreading with a majesty never before witnessed; and throwing back a light upon Europe, which electrified the friends of religion and of man, showed the enslaved their rights, and made the thrones of tyranny tremble. From this combination of character arose a Brainerd, an Edwards, and a Dwight, applying a mighty arm to the movements of the church here and in England, towards the day of millennial glory.

Whence go that company of youthful adventurers, whom I see with the Bible in their hand, and their eye lifted to heaven, doubling the Cape of Good Hope, and raising the torch of the Gospel on the benighted shores of Hindoostan; and others bending their way around Cape Horn, and planting the standard of the cross on the islands of the Pacific, whilst thousands of the poor natives cast away their idols and exclaim, "The Lord he is God; the Lord he is God!" And still others leaving all the endearments of home that they may gather the wandering tribes of the west into the Redeemer's fold? Whence proceed the men, who are making the dark forests of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri, to bloom like Eden? Who are the enterprising merchants, the teachers of youth, the lights of the churches, over the whole west and south? Are they not the descendants of the Pilgrims? Here God was pleased to gather all the rays of human perfection from the old world, and to condense them into one great

and intense light, which we believe, notwithstanding some occasional obscurities, shall shine brighter and brighter, till it shall illuminate and rejoice the world. Sacred, awful spot! Thoughts full of majesty come hurrying down from the past, and visions of unspeakable glory rise on the future. God of the Pilgrims! here thou uncoverest the glory of thy purposes, and I seem to hear the mandate, "Take the shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

Never did children assemble to pay a tribute to the venerated dead, under such a weight of obligation, as that which this moment presses upon us. Never did sublimer associations gather around a mere human event. We here offer not the gratitude of New England, but the gratitude of the *world*.

Parents, look at the example of the Pilgrims, and consider what a tide of blessings you may send down to unborn generations. Statesmen, fix your admiring gaze on the Pilgrims of New England, and learn to form a nation, whose glory shall be its holiness, whose defence the mighty God as a wall of fire round about it. Their efficiency was in the Almighty Spirit—they walked with God. Never was there a colony planted with so much prayer, and never was there a colony established whose results were so glorious.

Fellow immortals, how rapidly pass away the successive generations of men!

"Where are our fathers?—Whither gone
The mighty men of old!
The patriarchs, prophets, princes, kings,
In sacred books enroll'd?—
Gone to the resting place of man,
His long, his silent home;
Where ages past have gone before,
Where future ages come!"

The portals of eternity are opening before us. Those waves on which our fathers' bark rode, still lash the shore. The little island on which they kept their first

Sabbath, 208 years ago yesterday,* still stands as a modest remembrancer of our fathers' piety. These two hills, which they ascended, and with trembling hearts descried far away in the dark forest the Indian fires, maintain their place and form ; and between them, that brook of pure water, beside which they walked, in holy musing on the designs of Providence in relation to them and their offspring, still winds its way into the ocean. But our fathers, where are they ?—Brewster, Carver, Winslow, Bradford, Alden,—gone into eternity, and six generations of their posterity have followed them. The green turf beneath our feet covers all that was mortal of them ; but their purified, exalted souls, are striking their golden harps on Mount Zion above. Enrapturing to the heart of a Jew was the anticipation of joining his ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Sons of New England, would you join that glorified band of your Pilgrim fathers? Would you meet them in peace on that day when all human institutions shall be dissolved, and the earth itself consumed?—Serve their God, adore their Saviour, fly to that cross, which they found as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. O, would you send onward to unborn generations a tide of the richest blessings, such as you can look down upon with satisfaction from the mansions of the redeemed after centuries have rolled away,—bind their holy principles to your hearts, and maintain the institutions established by their prayers and sacrifices, institutions recommended by an experiment of unparalleled success, and stamped with the seal of heaven's approbation, with your latest breath.

* A small Island in Plymouth harbor, called Clark's Island, seen from the shore, on which an exploring party of eighteen in their boat landed on Saturday evening, supposing it to be the main land. Here they rested on the holy Sabbath, devoting the day to the worship of God, and on Monday morning came on shore at Plymouth. This discourse was delivered on Monday, the same day of the week, as well as of the month, on which our fathers landed on the Plymouth rock.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 069 189 6

